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INSPIRATIONS IN BURMA

By
BRIJ LAL NEHRU

With an Introduction by
SIR TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU, P.C., LL.D.

AND
Foreword by
K. G. SAIYIDAIN
Director of Education, Jammu and Kashmir

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INTRODUCTION

There is internal evidence in the poems of Pt. Brij Lal Nehru which are now being printed and issued that many of them were written nearly a quarter of a century ago and if my memory does not fail me, that was the time when he was posted at Allahabad as Deputy Accountant-General. I came a good deal into touch with him at that time. It rather seemed to me to be odd that a man dealing every day of his life with rupees, annas and pies should have something of the poet in him. In the circle in which he moved at that time Ghalib was being much admired even though he was not always understood. I remember Pt. Brij Lal Nehru speaking to me on many occasions about Ghalib and his poetry. One day he brought to me his translation of a famous ghazal of Ghalib, which I am glad to

notice, appears in these pages. It would be more accurate to say that it is not a translation. It gives the pith of Ghalib's poem. I enjoyed it much at that time and at this distance of time after a quarter of a century I have read it again and enjoyed it. There are other poems of an intimate character written as the spirit moved Pt. Brij Lal Nehru and they will afford pleasure, and some of them also amusement, to the casual reader.

With that literary taste which has always characterised my friend, he has always pursued the hobby of writing verses and I do not think that there can be a better hobby. My own hobby has been to enjoy verses written by other people. I have been a singular failure in composing verses myself. Nevertheless I enjoy what others write and it is not as a critic but as a friend that I am writing to say that Pt. Brij Lal Nehru's verses have given me enjoyment in the midst of much taxing work. I notice that the few years that he spent in Burma have also inspired his muse. Now that he is living in Kashmir, which is intimately

connected with the memory of Jehangir and Noor Jehan, I trust he may one day give us something about Shalimar and Nishat and Nasim Baghs, the scenes of Noor Jehan and Jehangir's amorous ventures. It is not necessary for a poet to be young in years. There are instances on record of very old men and Pt. Brij Lal Nehru has not yet reached the age when he can be described as very old, or even old—of having written warm-hearted poetry. What should inspire Pt. Brij Lal Nehru more than anything else is the poetic atmosphere of Kashmir and I trust we may not have to wait long before we get another small book bearing witness to his inborn gifts and giving us some colourful poetry about Kashmir, the Shalimar, the Nishat, the Dal and, if possible, also the Wooller!!

ALLAHABAD
May 15, 1943

TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU

FOREWORD

Pandit Brij Lal Nehru has done me the exacting honour of asking me to write a Foreword to this small collection of his poems. I have accepted the invitation with great hesitation, for how can one, who has not the remotest claim to being a poet, lightly undertake such a task? Pandit Nehru, as a poet, is psychologically a most interesting phenomenon. He belongs to one of the most distinguished and cultured families of India, the family of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, which has made its mark in many fields of our national life. But Fate, always an unpredictable and wayward mistress, chose for him a prosaic, if distinguished, career in Finance! His large circle of friends and acquaintances know him only as an "Accountant General," an officer of whom all are a little afraid and whose favours most people are

anxious to court. But the same wayward Fate that sent this cultured and sensitive young man—as he then was—to dabble in figures and make sense out of them also decided to play another trick—this time a very pleasant one—on him. In 1916, when he was at the susceptible age of the early thirties, the exigencies of service took him to the beautiful, exotic and romantic land of Burma, now laid waste, alas! by the onslaught of the Japanese. It was there that he woke up one fine morning in the month of March to find himself—a poet! He had never before attempted to write poetry; in fact, according to his own admission, he had not the remotest idea that he could write any poetry at all. But that morning he found his mind in what may be described as a poetic ferment; scenes that had impressed him with their beauty, love and friendships that had flashed across his life's path, problems and ideas, doubts and perplexities which had intrigued his mind—all these came surging with unsuspected force and vitality and, curiously enough, they had decided to don

the garb of poetry. Without any training or premonition, he found himself writing poetry, now grave, now gay, now serious, now trifling. He did not know how it had happened; he did not know why it had happened. The wind of poetry—like the wind of genius—bloweth where it listeth; one knoweth not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth and for one brief, but glorious, year it decided to blow across the placid garden or am I mistaken about the adjective? of Pandit Nehru. For, it was yet another strange freak of this self-willed Muse that it abided with him—in a poetic liaison as it were!—for just about twelve months and, when the midsummer tempest had subsided, it left the young Finance Officer as sedate—or am I again mistaken?—and as disinclined to write poetry as before. And, for a quarter of a century, these poems—born so spontaneously and joyously—lay hibernating; very few people knew that they existed. Was it that the older and maturer Nehru was too shy to own their paternity? But now, in the comparative fulness of years, when one can visualise things

in their true perspective, he sees them for what they really are—a new, if short-lived, “mutation” which has passed away but not without enriching his life and giving it—I hope—a new dimension. And I am glad that they are, at last, seeing the light of day, after twenty-five long years of patient obscurity.

I am not competent to discuss the technical merits of these poems but I have no doubt that the trained and impeccable, high-browed critic may find in them many things on which to exercise his carping critical faculty. There is a dreadful thing—which all lay men like me hold in trembling respect—called Prosody; there are two dragons which guard Poesy’s abode: Rhythm and Meter; there is another tyrant called Grammar which takes language to pieces and tries to fit words into a jigsaw puzzle and frowns upon them if they do not behave in a respectable manner. With these I am happily not concerned. I welcome these poems, primarily, as expression of a certain definite personality and I am pleasantly surprised that they should have at all come into

being in this unexpected manner. They reflect the passing moods as well as the more abiding attitudes and reactions of a young man with varied interests who is as deeply moved—even though he pretends to be a hard-boiled and disillusioned cynic!—at love's desertion as at the haunting beauty of "My Lady of Moulmein;" who is sensitive to the doom for which Europe, drunk with power, was heading at the time and can share his emotional moods with the singing bird as he wings his flight to the distant horizon. For, after all, the distinctive and most valuable gift of the human spirit—whatever the cynic and the hard-boiled materialists may say—is neither the making of machines nor the making of money; it is the making of beautiful things; the beauty that is in art and literature, in craftsmanship and architecture, in the phrase that is aptly turned and the philosophic thought that is strikingly and significantly expressed. In these channels does the spirit of man seek its characteristic expression; without them it becomes atrophied and "turns into stone."

In these poems Pandit Nehru found a congenial medium of self-expression, if only for a few months, and one may profitably wonder why the flame was so evanescent.

This is but a small collection of poems, pleasant and easy to read through, so that there is little reason for me to sample them in this short Foreword. I might, however, quote a few lines from here and there showing Pandit Nehru in varying moods, lines which have appealed to me as sincerely self-expressional and which will, I hope, appeal to others also.

Addressing Europe in the throes of the last Great War, Pandit Nehru prophesies, a prophecy which bids fair, however belatedly to come true:—

“Europe ! thy day is done, thy doom is
sealed,
Thy Karma grips thee in her thrall. Behold
The law of Buddha takes its sway, no
shield
No armour, Creusot, Maxim, Krupp, no
gold

From trodden nations filched, can save
thee now.”

The birth of his second son also moves him to poetry and the emotions called into play are certainly sincere, if not original, and they are expressed with force:—

“What made thee leave thy sphere divine,
Where man and God are one?
A sad mistake, but why repine?
I welcome thee my son.

“Welcome to this land of strife,
And ceaseless agitation,
So different from thy saintly life
In thy heavenly station.

“Nor yet believe the world is made
Entirely of badness;
Allied to it, like light to shade,
Are elements of gladness.

“And should Ambition beckon thee,
March boldly up, my boy,

Nor count the cost, nor nervous be
But take the helm with joy."

Some of the poems owe their inspiration to Ghalib's verses, surcharged with emotion, which he has tried to render into English—a difficult undertaking accomplished with success. Such are "Were I, at last, into the Presence brought."

"Yearning" and "The rose or poppy in the garden blowing." He has been able to convey something of the haunting melody and the appealing melancholy which throbs in the original. In lighter vein and with pleasant spontaneity he writes of his "Lady of Moulmein," apostrophising her with a touching sincerity and affection. Here is his toast to the Lady of Moulmein:—

"Much have I travelled far and wide,
And many towns and cities seen,
But fairest far, where she does glide,
My Lady of Moulmein.

“Yes, one there was my heart did stir,
Fair Lerna, Eria’s proud colleen,
O, do not grudge my sigh for her,
Kind Lady of Moulmein.

“For the spell is gone and thou alone
Reign’st in my heart, a peerless Queen,
My past forgive, my faults condone,
Dear Lady of Moulmein.”

In “Friendship” also, the reader will find the same flow and spontaneity.

Finally, one glimpse of Pandit Nehru in a more serious and contemplative mood, as the never-solved puzzle of life invades his heart and mind:

“A conflict strange is in my mind
’tween Faith and Doubt
Year in and out,
And sore perplexed no light I find
To guide me in this alley blind.

“Ah ! see you bigots who would prove
They hold the key,
But needlessly

I argue, for they cannot move
Beyond Prescription's narrow groove.

“‘Then love exists?’ I cry in pain,
And Prophets wise
Make strange replies,
And some would doubt while some
maintain
It is the child of a madman's brain.”

And he ends up the quest with what is really a
cry of despair, even though it may clothe
itself in profound philosophic argument:—

“While thus I flounder in the mist
And all is doubt
Within, without
I hear an inward Voice insist
‘Thou too, vain man, dost not exist.’”

It may be a moot point whether Pandit
Nehru does or does not exist, but I am sure his
youthful poems do and I have much pleasure in
setting them gaily afloat on this Ocean of Maya.

Jammu
February, 1943

K. G. SAIYIDAIN

PREFACE

These verses were written long ago when I had the good fortune of spending a few years in that most beautiful and fascinating land of Burma. One day I had occasion to read them out to my kind friends, Mr. Justice Masud Hasan and Mr. K. G. Saiyidain and it is on their friendly and loving insistence that I have agreed to put them in print. If they help my friends to pass an agreeable half-hour that will be my highest reward.

The Right Hon. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru has graciously contributed a most valuable Introduction. He it was who, in those days of long ago, first encouraged me to write and at whose instance I tried to render into English Verse some of the Couplets of Ghalib included in this little Volume. It is only fitting that he should now sponsor it before

a larger world of friends. I gladly place on record here my profound sense of gratitude to him for the encouragement received and for the gift of his valuable time which he must have found difficult to spare from his multifarious activities devoted to the interests of his people and country.

To Mr. Saiyidain I am indebted for the Foreword he has so kindly written. He, too, is a very busy personality engaged in the highly successful battle he is waging on behalf of Vidya against Avidya.

My thanks are also due to Mrs. Mona Tyabji for typing and proof-reading and for many valuable suggestions which have been incorporated.

I am grateful also to Mr. Krishna Prasad Dar for the excellence of the get-up of this volume in spite of immense difficulties due to the abnormal times in which we are living.

JAMMU
February, 1943

BRIJLAL NEHRU

.

GLORIOUS IRRAWADDY

1. I too am now a poet,
Your indulgence I implore,
I hope I'll soon exploit
The mines of Poesy's ore.

2. The solitude profound -
Of Burma's circuit houses,
And the verdant scene around
In me a sense arouses,

3. That hitherto lay dormant,
Although I thought it dead.
Fair Nature's my informant,
I see its lustre shed.

4. On everything around me—
Sweet Burma's alleys green,
The valley of Irrawaddy,
A fairer ne'er were seen.
5. Thou broad and noble river,
The pride of all the East,
The West has nothing better
My travelled eyes to feast.
6. I've seen the Thames, the Neva,
The Seine, the Po, the Rhine,
The Danube and the Vistula,
But thou alone art mine.
7. The others too are pretty,
'Gainst them I've nought to say,
But the subject of my ditty,
Is prettier far than they.

8. They're sung by bards uncounted
And poets of renown,
Whose fame had higher mounted
If only they had known
9. The beauties of thy waters,
Their wide and silent flow,
And of thy many daughters,
As to the Sea they go—
10. A beauteous procession—
By fairy towns and hamlets,
“A lovely apparition,”
Beyond the dream of poets.
11. Glorious Irrawaddy,
O! Thou of peerless daughters,
I bow my head before thee,
As I travel o'er thy waters.

March 26, 1916

SONNET

Europe! thy day is done, thy doom is sealed,
Thy Karma grips thee in her thrall. Behold
The law of Buddha takes its sway, no shield,
No armour, Creusot, Maxim, Krupps, no gold
From trodden nations filched can save thee now.
'Twas so with Asia once, who in her pride
And arrogance of power perceived not how
A mightier Power watched, to cast aside
Each limb and soul and body, when the cup
Of her Iniquities and crimes appalling,
—Those of the modern Huns or Serbs recalling—
With bitters to the brim had been filled up.
Europe, beware, I fear the warning's late,
O! Take a lesson from thy Sisters fate.

March 28, 1916

.

THE MAID OF CEYLON

1. And was it for this that you lured me,
And my peace with false hopes have
destroyed?
I thank you, of madness you cured me
And taught there's no bliss unalloyed.
2. I am wiser, but can I forgive you
For months that for you I have wasted?
Not again will I ever believe you,
Or again leave my dinner untasted.
3. You were kind, and you smiled when I
met you
For the first time on board the "Ceylon".
I was happy, ah ! can I forget you
And the radiance that then on me shone ?

4. Unasked for some favours you made me,
My joy in this manner enhancing,
You promised me more, and you bade me
To write billets-doux quite entrancing.
5. And so with blithe heart when I parted
And held out my hand for good-bye,
Who was it to a corner that darted,
And gave me a sweet kiss, with a sigh?
6. And was it a bird to me whispered,
Did I fancy or dream, "O my darling,
I'll meet you and love you," it twittered;
Who was it—a sparrow, a starling?
7. It was foolish, I know, to expect you
To the letter your promise to fulfil,
But I never knew how little recked you
How many the hearts that you kill.

8. At Mandalay once you did fail me,
And gave me a nice explanation;
I took it, though nought it availed me
But to cheer through the long separation.
9. I trusted. With patience I waited
And counted the slow moving hours,
My thoughts with my darling elated
And dreaming of roses and bowers.
10. I sat by the window to ponder,
And gaze with blank eyes on the sea,
Unheeded the hills over yonder,
Unheeded my luncheon, my tea.
11. The grandest of views lay neglected,
Surpassing the charms of Cashmere;
With sorrow my heart lay dejected,
Unmindful of scenes once so dear.

12. Glued was my gaze fascinated,
Enchained to the far circling line,
As I mused on my seat elevated
On the joys of the love to be mine.
13. Impatient I grew of the vigil,
And raved at the Kistna's tarrying,
And I swore and I stamped—but to still
Wild fancies my soul that were harrying.
14. I failed. And so often to cheer me
I'd picture the scenes o' the "Ceylon",
I'd re-read the letters signed V. C.
And think of the days that are gone.
15. Let them go, but the letters I'll treasure,
Of a few happy days they'll remind,
When for long is forgotten the pleasure,
And forgotten my follies so blind.

16. The fruit that was once so delicious,
No longer for me has a charm,
Your smiles are now but meretricious,
Your glances now fail to alarm.

May 12, 1916

.

‘ON THE BIRTH OF MY SECOND
SON’

1. O ! puling Stranger, welcome thou,
 Though yet to me unknown,
Thy face, thy form, to thee I bow,
 And welcome thee my own.
2. What made thee leave thy sphere divine,
 Where man and God are one ?
A sad mistake, but why repine ?
 I welcome thee, my son.
3. Welcome to this land of strife,
 And ceaseless agitation,
So different from thy saintly life
 In thy heavenly station.

4. Welcome to this world of woe,
This world of vice and sadness,
This constant struggle to and fro
Of sanity and madness.
5. Let not the prospect frighten thee,
Or cause a little flutter
In thy wee heart, nor think thou'lt be
Alone in darkness utter.
6. To thee will lend their helping hand
Thy father and thy mother,
And guide thee through this darksome
land,
In Company with thy brother.
7. Nor yet believe the world is made
Entirely of badness;
Allied to it, like light to shade,
Are elements of gladness.

8. In love of parents thou wilt find
Life has its compensations—
A refuge sure from blows unkind
And galling provocations.
9. And when thou art to manhood grown
And gain'st a woman's love,
Then thou wilt feel a joy scarce known
In the starry realms above.
10. And should Ambition beckon thee,
March boldly up, my boy,
Nor count the cost, or nervous be,
But take the helm with joy.
11. Walk with thy brother hand in hand,
And heart to heart united
In friendship strong; to love of land
Let thy pure heart be plighted.

12. Let your twin labour win for both
A happy consummation—
A people's love, and ye stand forth
Two leaders of the nation;
13. Such as were born in days of yore,
The days of India's glory,
Recorded in the pages hoar,
Of our brilliant story.
14. That thou may prove a country's joy,
And of thy Clan a hero,
I give a welcome, O my boy,
To thee the youngest Nehru.

May 27, 1916

THANKS, YOU THREE

1. Dear Chander, Janak and Swarup
And all of you Kumaris,
Three charming girls not out of school,
Or shall I say three fairies,
2. Your lovely letter just arrived
Intensely has delighted
Your Bijju Bhai who gives you thanks,
For your congrats united.
3. And your request he won't forget,
You ask for some Mithai.
But give him time, for in Rangoon
There's hardly any Halvai.

4. But soon as the Bengal Bay is crossed
Of sweets you'll have your fill,
Your choice'tween Lucknow, Agra, Lahore,
Or Delhi if you will.
5. Meanwhile content you must remain
With much though empty thanks:
Fear not your wishes will be vain,
Be sure you've drawn no blanks.
6. I hope this letter finds you well,
Each in her separate sphere,
For two of you in Prayag dwell
And one is in Cashmere.

May 27, 1916

A PRAYER TO THE MUSES

1. Listen ye Muses to this prayer of mine,
A humble Votary I,
I bring no incense to your sacred shrine,
Yet dare to seek protection beneath your
wings divine.
2. Bestow on me your kindly smile—but one—
Nay turn me not away,
I vow that, ere my sands of life have run,
Much incense will I bring, now I have just
begun.
3. O, guide my nervous hands to string the lyre,
Ye glorious Nine,
And on Parnassus heights let me respire
And kindle into flame my weak Promethean fire.

4. Let it consume my body, soul and all,
That my scattered ashes
From the four ends may answer your high
call,
And Phoenix-like reviving, my song the
world enthrall.

June 4, 1916

TO MASTER BRAJ KUMAR

1. There is a darling little boy,
His name is Braj Kumar,
His mother he does not annoy !
But he wants a motor car.
2. He rides his pony in the morn,
And in the afternoon.
But the naughty one his bit does scorn,
And tumbles him full soon.
3. But my brave boy his fall disdains;
He rises from the ground,
Brushes his coat, takes up the reins
And gallops firmly round.

4. The standers-by his courage admire,
And all cry out "Well done,"
Then smiling proud does he retire,
And to his Maji run.
5. And all are pleased and Amma sends,
To fetch the Guruji,
Performs some Puja, feeds some friends
With Halwa made of Suji.
6. And when the news to Burma comes,
His Papaji's delight
No bound it knows, a tune he hums
And goes a poem to write.

July 21, 1916

STEEL NOT THY HEART

1. Steel not thy heart, O man in power!
Do not God's greatest gift destroy,
Pluck not the petals of this flower,
Mix not pure gold with base alloy.
2. Think, when thine eyes in anger glower,
(That should the soul divine reflect)
Look, where thy wretched victims cower—
Anguished, their dreaded fate expect.
3. O ! think and turn those fearful eyes
To the dark nook where huddled wait,
And pray to Heaven with half-choked sighs
And agonied looks, in tearful prate—

4. Yon helpless children fresh as flowers,
But drooping through the dread suspense
Of what might bring the fateful hours,
Foreboding Destiny's imminence.
5. What heart so hard, what eye so stern,
But would dissolve in melting showers ?
As, Lo ! Dark clouds where lightings burn
Pour forth in rain when thunder lowers.
6. What though the doom pronounced be just,
Dost thou not hear the woeful wail,
The piercing shriek ?—Snatch not the crust,
Let heavenly mercy weigh the scale.
7. Though thou art 'mong the world's elect,
Dost thou thyself perfection claim ?
Cannot thy conscience aught detect,
To make thy cheeks suffuse with shame ?

8. Presume not harshly then to judge,
 We all are made of erring clay,
A drop of mercy do not grudge,
 Thyself may have to beg one day.

July 25, 1916

THE LADY OF MOULMEIN

1. Much have I travelled far and wide,
 And many towns and cities seen,
But fairest far where she does glide
 My Lady of Moulmein.

2. And wheresoe'er my Fancy turned,
 In search of Beauty have I been,
But ne'er before my heart had burned,
 My Lady of Moulmein.

3. And charming were the maids I met,
 And dazzling was their tresses' sheen,
But glossier far thy raven jet,
 My Lady of Moulmein.

4. And from their wicked laughing eyes,
 Though, so much knowledge did I glean,
One glance from thee made me more wise,
 My Lady of Moulmein.
5. The wiles of French and Yankee girls,
 And Burmese maids from famed Salin,
Have failed, but in my brain there whirls
 The Lady of Moulmein.
6. Yes, one there was my heart did stir,
 Fair Lorna, Erin's proud colleen;
O, do not grudge my sigh for her,
 Kind Lady of Moulmein.
7. For the spell is gone and thou alone
 Reign'st in my heart a peerless Queen;
My past forgive, my faults condone,
 Dear Lady of Moulmein.

8. My homage to thy charms so fair,
Thy grace of sweetest seventeen,
On bended knees I fealty swear
To the Lady of Moulmein.

July 27, 1916

DOUBTS

1. A conflict strange is in my mind
 'Tween Faith and Doubt
 Year in and out,
 And sore perplexed no light I find
 To guide me in this alley blind.
2. Why, whence, come we and whither go,
 These questions deep
 Disturb my sleep
 And make me waver to and fro
 Until I know I cannot know.
3. Ah! See yon bigots who would prove
 They hold the key,
 But needlessly,
 I argue, for they cannot move
 Beyond Prescription's narrow groove.

4. And in excitement waxing hot,
 Sans thought or care
 Would gladly tear
 To pieces "this ungodly lot",
Charity and love are soon forgot.
5. "Then love exists?" I cry in pain,
 And prophets wise
 Make strange replies,
 And some would doubt while some
 maintain
It is the child of a madman's brain.
6. Poor Nightingale ! thy hope is dead,
 Thy plaintive wail
 Unfolds thy tale,
 Thy heart is broke, thy youth is fled,
The doubting Rose still shakes her head.

7. "Dear heart," sad Nightingale replies,
 "I woo the Rose
 "Pour forth my woes,
 "Mine are not philosophic sighs,
 "To me her kiss is Paradise."

8. I know they talk of Paradise,—
A pleasant place
For Love's embrace
And wine and Song—a tempting
prize—
But tinsel shows tempt not the wise.

9. Come, foolish bird, thy sorrows cease,
Waste not sweet years
In fruitless tears
Enjoy thy little life in peace,
For thine is but a narrow lease.

10. Ah, Life ! I see a passing gleam
And rub my eyes
In dazed surprise,
And ask, "Is this a living beam
"Or fond Illusion's fevered dream !"

11. See Nature's panorama too—
How nobly grand
The starry band—
Be not deceived, this glorious view
Wears only Fancy's roseate hue.

12. While thus I flounder in the mist
And all is doubt
Within without
I hear an inward Voice insist
"Thou too, vain man, dost not exist."

September 7, 1916

YEARNING

(Translated from Ghalib)

1. I yearn for a place where we may dwell,
My Soul and I,
And the unrest of my mind to quell
With no one by,
None to disturb Meditation's Swell,
No watcher nigh.
2. I long to build for myself a cell
Beneath the sky,
Sans wall, sans roof to break the spell
Or stifle sigh,
Far from vain Sympathy's hollow Shell
Or Friendship's Eye;

3. Where no Angel ministers, or well
Or sick be I,
Where no Mourner is to toll my knell
Perchance I die,
No stone or mound the spot to tell
Where my ashes lie.

FROM GHALIB

The Rose or Poppy in the garden blowing
May give rebirth to some few faces glowing,
A myriad Houris still in Death repose,
Alas ! how many, 'neath the soil, worth know-
ing.

In bygone days my expert hands could trace
The Mahfil's decorations' varied grace,
Now aged Palsy to my carvings gives,
In the Chamber of Forgetfulness a place.

These glowing daughters of the Peris bright,
In Paradise must make up for the slight
On me here cast, if by the grace of God,
They turn to Houris in the Golden Light.

The Soul by numerous sorrows' pangs opprest
Soon finds contentment in Oblivion blest;
So many difficulties assailed me once,
They solved themselves and I was soon at rest.

June 5, 1916

TRANSLATIONS FROM GHALIB

Were I, at last, into the Presence brought,
Find words to soothe the Fair One I could not,
For all the Fond Endearments that I knew
Were spent upon the Durwan, waxing Hot.

Ah ! Let the Stream of bitter Tears flow on,
I mourn the loss of my Beloved, gone;
My Eyes run like two candles, as they light
The gloom of Darkness, waiting for the Sun.

Hiding behind the Veil in timorous Fright,
While shines in Heaven the Orb that giveth
Light;
At Dusk, the gladsome Daughters of the Sky
Dance passion-tossed in Nakedness Outright.

FAREWELL TO THE LADIES OF RANGOON

1. To all you charming ladies here
 Who with your presence grace this scene
Of joyous glee and festive cheer
 That, but for one, had brighter been—
I welcome bid, not in my name
 But hers who had a higher claim.

2. Though waves twixt you and her may roll
 And yet outstretch the weary plains,
No earthly barrier keeps a soul
 From kindred souls—the fact remains
In person though she's far away,
 Her thoughts are with you here to-day.

3. Full many a time has she expressed
Her wish to join this lovely throng;
Such also was your kind request,
Dear ladies, mine the fault, ere long
Her rising star I hope to see
Amidst this brilliant galaxy.
4. Meanwhile, to serve as escort meet,
To cross the plains and brave the seas,
Permission, humbly I entreat;
And if perchance the gods it please
That I see not this land again
Pray in your hearts a nook retain
5. For one who loved this country fair,
Whose yearning deep was ne'er con-
cealed,
To whom before such beauty rare,
Such wealth of grace was ne'er revealed,

Though long he roamed the foreign strand,
Till chance led to this fairy land.

6. Think not without a pang I part
 Though outwardly a calm prevail;
A tearless eye but aching heart
 Are omens of a coming gale.
My grief no words of mine can tell
 Enough, enough, farewell, farewell.

December 5, 1916

TO A. W.

1. A. W. oft my mind recalls
 Those far-off days when we two met;
A gem you were in Beauty's halls,
 Your rays my heart illumine yet.
2. Let Earth its endless rounds perform,
 Let time on human follies smile,
The Pole-star shines through calm or storm,
 Who can fond memory beguile?
3. And wheresoe'er my footsteps roam,
 Thy guardian image with me flies,
O'er trackless woods or briny foam,
 Time, Censure, Conscience, all defies.

4. And sometimes though midst human haunts,
And pressing worries of the hour,
Or where his flag Red Mammon flaunts,
I may perchance forget thy power,
5. Unchained the mind flies back, e'er after
What anguish fills my soul with bliss?
The memory of thy rippling laughter,
The remembrance of thy virgin kiss.
6. Old Nature has a myriad faces,
But each one with a pang reminds,
Of thy cognate unchanging graces,
A fresh link with thy memory binds.

THE FACE OF LONDON TOWN

1. As once I wandered up and down
 The thoroughfares of London town,
My eyebrows puckered in a frown
 In silent meditation,
The brilliant shops on either side,
 The jostling throngs on pavements wide,
As in a dream I felt them glide
 To an unknown destination.

2. The throbbing motors rushing by,
 The crowded buses thund'ring high,
All in a dreamland seemed to ply,
 As onwards I proceeded,

The houses ghost-like reared their head
And from their windows lustre shed
From Through their curtains gleaming red,
But all by me unheeded.

3. The play-house portals opened wide,
Outpouring came the merry tide
Of glowing damsels gazelle eyed,
Of bosoms soft and snowy,
Enchantment lurking in their glance,
As perfume-scattering they advance,
Attended by the servile dance
Of dandies stiff and showy.

4. Theirs the youthful beauty's bloom
That spells the luckless lover's doom,
Enhanced by jewel and by plume,
That in their tresses shine;

Those velvet tresses dark or fair,
That bind the heart all unaware,
Escaping oft in ringlets rare,
On cheeks incarnadine.

5. Theirs the graceful stately gait
Advancing like an arrow straight,
That pierces e'en the hearts sedate
Of hermits in their cells;
Those hermits who on Alpine rocks
Would shun the senses' worldly shocks
And the voluptuous lure of frocks
'Mong shepherds' tingling bells.
6. And theirs the pouting lips supine,
That fain would give a sip divine,
To him that worships at their shrine,
Of their delicious nectar;

The parted lips their teeth disclose
Of ivory white in pearly rows,
And all in all from head to toes,
No form could be perfecter.

7. But by these graces undeterred,
 (Although my heart, a trifle stirred,
 To wistful fancies now demurred,)
 I wended on my way;
The inward din of clamorous thought,
 This petty incident begot,
Resounded on my Conscience fraught
 With something like dismay.

8. With footsteps quickened, on I past,
 As flying from a thunderblast
Or from a spell by magian cast
 His victim's doom to seal;

That lovely vision soon was o'er,
And quickly hushed the traffic's roar,
My thoughts again began to soar
With their accustomed zeal.

“—AND HAVING WRIT MOVES ON—”

1. Hail truant bridegroom ! brought to bay
at last,
Now smiling sweetly to thy fate submit,
Thy bondless gallivanting days are past,
Around thee chains unseen are firmly
knit.
2. No more Llanduduo's sands will see thy
chase,
A shilling's recompense will tempt thee
not,
A thousand pounds will not advance thy
pace
Up the Great Orme—what though the
scent be hot.

3. No more to Dublin's Juliet wilt thou
Sweet languorous Romeo with a wistful
Or hand in hand with Elsie love to
Down mazy pathways in the Valley
Fair.
4. At Cambridge Maud will wait for thee
Within the garden by the trellised gate—
In vain—with rising sobs and heart of
In loneliness to mourn her hapless fate.
5. In vain in Heidelberg the fraulein watches,
Her burning wishes cannot take thee
there;

And nought remains but sackcloth and
much ashes
For the Paris grizette in her dumb
despair.

6. And thou fair daughter of Milano's clime,
Sweet as the cooing dove, what hopest
thou ?
Forget the fickle swain while yet is time
Lest careworn furrows mar thy placid
brow.

7. Turn we our gaze from these soul-rack-
ing scenes
The poet's bleeding heart can hardly
bear,
To where gay youths and damsels in
their teens,
For song and dance and frolic mirth
repair.

8. In Bullier's hall the dance its sinuous
round
In sensuous contortions gaily trips;
Not there again my hero will be found,
Thy sun, Bal Bullier, has suffered an
eclipse.
9. Thy brother Tabarin mourns his dismal
fate,
The Latin Quarter all bewail their loss,
No longer will he pass the Rat Mort's
gate
Or of the Moulin Rouge the threshold
cross.
10. In Maxim's brilliant hall the feast is
spread,
With weight of precious wines the tables
groan,

While Sylph like figures dance with fairy
tread—
And breathe soft words of hope in amo-
rous tone.

11. With rapt attention all the men admire—
But who is he that in a corner mopes ?
Ah, Herr Professor, some misfortune dire—
Perhaps thy pupil's loss hath broke thy
hopes.
12. With thee no longer will he absinthe sip
Nor swallow tankards of thy Munich
beer,
Or e'er again learn wisdom from thy lips,
A fairer teacher has secured his ear.
13. If thou could'st see the sight I now be-
hold,

In thy dear pupil's happiness thou'd re-
joice,
See how he smirks already, just enrolled
'Mong Kama's bondmen, with Acclama-
tion's voice.

14. Behold the bevy of sweet girls who
shower
Sweet streams of roses on the happy pair,
As emblems of good wishes—for my
power
To sing too high, much as my Muse
would dare.

TO PAMELA

Pamela ! excellent maid, though lowly born,
Of mind sublime, among thy sex a pearl,
And sweet of face as the new-breaking morn,
What time the skies their spangled banners furl.
Great was thy virtue's triumph, noble girl
A better name fit wast thou to adorn
Than villainous Mr. B's—a greater churl
Ne'er breathed—to thy pure heart a pointed
thorn.

Strange were the times in which thy lot was
cast

And stranger England's vaunted liberty,
Permitting crimes that leave us now aghast,
For which they should have hanged thy “ge-
nerous B.”

FRIENDSHIP

1. Come, little Birdie, let us talk
Our griefs to one another,
Thou hast a secret, hast thou not?
One, in my heart, I smother.
2. Comparing notes as friend to friend,
We may a torch illumine
To guide us through this darksome world,
To light us in our Gloom.
3. If, after all, we do not gain
The path we seek to find,
We'll brave it out and laugh and say,
"O: Never, Never Mind."

4. "'Tis better to have loved and lost,"
We've heard the poets say,
To test the truth of this old saw
We'd feign we made essay.
5. To hide the truth from curious folk
This camouflage we'll keep,
But thou to me and I to thee
Will talk of hearts that weep.
6. Dost know my secret? I know thine—
I guess it all the same—
Has thy Beloved been unkind
And spurned a heart aflame?
7. O: Come and shake my friendly hand,
I know what 'tis to feel
The Aches and Pains that thou hast felt,
But fain would'st not reveal.

8. And hand in hand—with knowing touch
Our griefs we shall unburden,
And thou from me and I from thee
Shall reap true friendship's guerdon.
9. The weight of sorrows shared with friends
Becomes no doubt a feather;
A mutual boon we shall confer
In chatting thus together.
10. Relieving thus our sinking hearts,
On th' endless quest we'll go;
Why should our loved ones be unkind,
What is it makes them so ?
11. Our Tears of Blood we shall conceal
Under a cloak of laughter,
And hope for better luck next time
And joyousness thereafter.

12. We may succeed or we may fail
Whatever be in store,
But thou to me and I to thee
Shall friends be evermore.

June 29, 1929

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MEDLEY

1. Shall I sing of mountains
Or shall I sing of rivers
Or shall I sing of fountains
Whose spray in rainbow shivers,
2. Or of the blazing flowers
That in abundance grow,
Of roses or of bowers
Where lovers love to go,
3. Or of the breezy islands
Where travellers love to roam
Or of the plaintive sigh-lands
Near by the billows foam,

4. Or of the starry nights
On Mergui's shore where dance
The phosphorescent lights
And myriad waves do glance;
5. Till presently there booms,
Oh Gods!—a sight divine—
And the breaking wave illumines
For miles a flaming line.
6. And I can tell of jungles
So fearsome thickly grown
Whose intricate tangles
No man or beast has known.
7. And of the crystal waters
Of pools and lakes and seas
Where Burma's graceful daughters
Sport in the heavenly breeze.

8. Or of the Caves that are hidden
In the bosom of the hills
Where echo the sounds unbidden
Of the secret flowing rills.

EPISTLE TO DR. SAPRU

Ye Gods and Angels what are these alarms?
They say that mighty Sapru's up in arms
And straight at Straight directs his cutting
small speech,
Pierces his armour, almost makes him screech
And Straight's subdued. But what is it about,
This fuss tremendous and the battle-shout?
'Tis but to cut a poor policeman's T. A.,
Earned wrongly, but to supplement his pay
Inadequate, to quote a high authority,
Unfortunately left in a minority
Of one, the cause his boss's base desertion
To ponder over his unwise assertion.
The victory's yours, dear Sapru, I am glad
For private friendship; yet I wish you had,

For public reasons, couched your graceful
lance

'Gainst spendthrift waste of travelling allow-
ance

In higher quarters, where the utmost need
Of saving every pice does not indeed
Seem to have quite been grasped; for why, I
ask,

Should High Court Judges or the L. G. bask
In the cosy comfort of a special train
Or a reserved compartment and not deign
In war-time travel like a common man?
Truth to speak they should be in the van
And show the way to wise economising.
Your silence on this point is much surprising.
Then there are others you might well have
tackled—

Themes outworn—and though your time is
shackled

By pressing clients who your aid demand,
Valued with confidence on every hand.
You might for instance take the I. C. S.,
Why should they gain by war when we get less,
And yet with cheerfulness we sacrifice
Our hard-earned money, rupees, annas, pice,
For freedom's cause and fain would give much
more,

If we could slightly open the martial door.
One instance given, you for others look,
'Mong serried row of items in the book
Called "budget" where you'll surely find
With charming things insidiously entwined
Some parasite, like creeper on a tree,
Or Cleopatra's viper, the "mar-i-astee" (n),
For you and all your colleagues to pursue
These cankerous growths to their sources true
And tear them root and branch nor ever deem
The labour vain though fruitless it may seem.

The fort must fall if to your trust you're true
As India expects of patriots like you.
My Muse gets tired and her accents rough;
A word to the wise—enough, enough.
That all success be yours in your new sphere
Is the distant humble poet's earnest prayer.

Tavoy, 1916.

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